

LEIBENGUTH CRACKS STATE JAVELIN MARK

By Kim Briggeman of the Missoulian

There are special moments like it in every state track meet.

Sometimes it's a breathtaking spring finish or a soaring long jump.

Friday it was the sight of a silver javelin knifing through the atmosphere and landing on the far side of a white flag.

The javelin was Marti Leibenguth's. The flag marked the Montana girls' javelin record 158 feet, 9 inches away.

On the Big Sky senior's fourth throw of the day, she eclipsed that mark with a line drive throw of 163-0 to get the record she came for. That reportedly is the best distance in the action this spring for a prep girl.

And it helped put the Big Sky girls into good position to contend for the state girls AA title on Saturday.

Butte's girls made a strong impression on the first day of the meet, rolling up 23 points to take the lead.

But an injury to Jackie Street could make it hard for the Bulldogs to hold onto its frontrunner spot.

Surprising Havre was tied for second with C.M. Russell at 18 points, while Big Sky had 17.

Billings West, among the pre-meet favorites, sustained a costly injury of its own to thrower Denise Fecht and may be out of the race with only 13 points.

The Class AA boy's race went pretty much as expected. Heavily favored Billings West piled up 34 points, followed by Havre's 17 and Big Sky's 16.

Helena High sits in fourth with 12 points. Then comes Hellgate with 10 and Sentinel with 7.

Big Sky's boys scored points in virtually every area. Coach Russ Pilcher expected to, and will probably rise to second place with another good day on Saturday.

- But Leibenguth's performance twinkled above all the others.

"My goal was to break the state record," she says. And she set out

to do that with a vengeance.

One of her preliminary throws sailed 157-4 and another went 154-11. Then came the big one, going more than four feet past Osborne's record.

Her final two attempts were also monsters - 158-9 and 161-3 - and even her competitors were cheering.

At about the same time, teammate Loreen McRae was following the indomitable Kathy Jarvis of Havre around the track to finish second in the 3,200.

Earlier, the Eagles got third in the 400-meter relay and fourth from Lisa Tade in the 300 hurdles and Emme Tuckett in the discus.

The javelin event may have been West's downfall. Fettsch, expected to contend for the state discus record on Saturday, hyperextended her left knee while finishing third.

Earlier, she was upset in the shot put by Havre's Chris Inman. Fettsch's status for Saturday was unknown, but she was in obvious pain after the javelin.

Street's injury put a damper on an otherwise bright Butte day. While pounding down the stretch with the lead in the 200, she pulled a hamstring.

She held on to finish second behind Havre's Michelle Cartwright. The extent of her injury was also uncertain, but losing her points in the 100 and 400 Saturday could prove fatal to the Bulldogs.

Butte's all-around star, Holly Maloney, was the chief catalyst behind her team's early lead. She won the high jump at 5-8, placed second in long jump behind Helena's Leslie Ursich, and was fifth in the javelin.

Marti is the daughter of K mart 3072 manager, M.L. Leibenguth. She has been given an athletic scholarship for basketball and has chosen to play with the Lady Grizzlies at the University of Montana, Big Sky Conference. She is currently rated number three in the nation in Prep javelin with an official track meet record of 158 feet 10 inches.

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Leibenguth was more or less thrust into the sport of javelin throwing two years ago when the track coach at her school had only two women javelin. He heard about Leibenguth pitching baseball in the men's leagues for five to six years and asked her to try the javelin. On her third throw, she not only set a new school record, but was then ahead of leading javelin throwers. From that point on, Leibenguth has continued to beat track meet records and set new personal records.

